

Judge sweeps away same sex marriage ban

By William H. Perkins Jr.
Editor

U.S. District Judge Carlton W. Reeves in Jackson on Nov. 25 struck down Mississippi's hard-fought state constitution amendment legally defining marriage as between a man and a woman.

"The court concludes that Mississippi's same sex marriage ban deprives same sex couples and their children of equal dignity under the law," wrote Reeves, a 2010 appointee of U.S. President Barack Obama. "Gay and lesbian citizens cannot be subjected to such second class citizenship. Mississippi's

same sex marriage ban violates the Due Process and Equal Protection clauses of the Fourteenth Amendment."

Reeves then granted a two-week stay of his ruling at the request of state officials defending the amendment, in order for an appeal to go forward to the U.S. Court of Ap-

peals for the Fifth Circuit in New Orleans.

If Fifth Circuit judges do not take action on Reeves' ruling within the two-week period, the real possibility exists that Mississippi's circuit clerks will soon be forced to issue marriage licenses to same sex couples.

"What are we as followers of Christ and members of His church to do?" asked Jimmy Porter, executive director of the Mississippi Baptist Christian Action Commission in Jackson, after the ruling was handed down. "First, we must

see BAN on p. 6

Bangladesh pastors arrested

Two accused of 'hurting religious sentiments'

DHAKA, Bangladesh (BP) — Two pastors in northwestern Bangladesh could each face two years in prison if convicted of "hurting religious sentiments."

Police arrested the pastors Nov. 9 along with 41 people listening to their preaching at a rented house in Nabinagar village, 186 miles northwest of Dhaka. At least 100 Muslims disrupted the Christian meeting and began "jabbing" at the church leaders' faces, sources said.

The 41 listeners, who were detained along with their children, were released that night. The pastors of Faith Bible Church of God were not released on bail until Nov. 17. They were charged with "hurting religious sentiments" and luring Muslims to convert by offering money.

The church leaders deny both charges. "We did not tell anything to anyone that might hurt religious sensibility," one of the pastors, said. "We did not offer any money to anyone to be converted to Christianity."

An area source told Morning Star News on condition of anonymity that the incident caused a furor among local Muslims. "More than 100 Muslims headed by local Jamaat-e-Islami party members and Muslim clerics gathered at the house and started barking questions at the pastors — why did they propagate Christianity in the locality and convert some of them?" the source said.

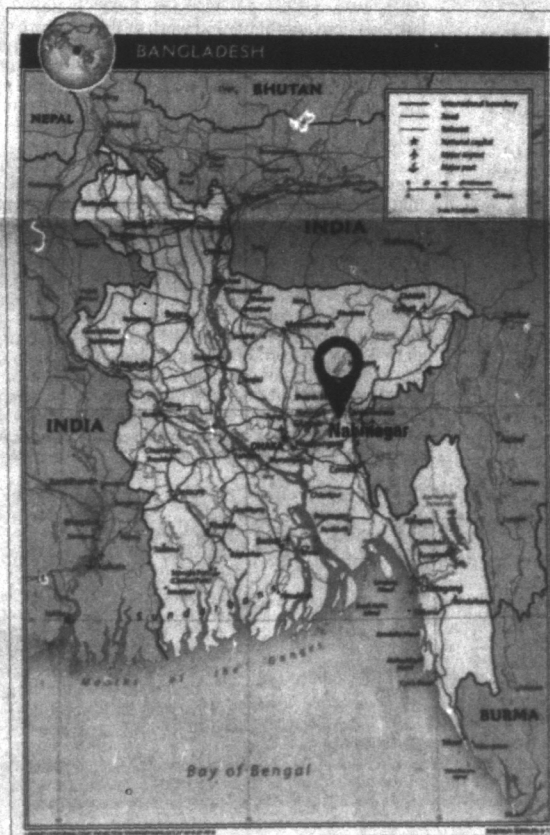
Islamist leaders asked the pastors who had given them permission to spread Christianity in the area. "The pastors replied that it did not take any permission from any authority to propagate any religion and convert people to any religion," the source said.

"Suddenly the Muslims became apoplectic with rage, tried to pick a fight and started jabbing the pastors' faces."

Police arrived, detained the pastors and those listening to their preaching, and took them to the Lalmonirhat police station. Local imams filed a case against the pastors the following day. Police told Morning Star News they were investigating.

Sunni Muslims constitute 90% of Bangladesh's population,

see BANGLADESH on p. 6



Founder of HRC indicted for sex with minor boy

By William H. Perkins Jr.
Editor

A founder of the group aggressively promoting equal rights for LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender) Mississippians has been indicted on two counts of third-degree sodomy and one count of third-degree sexual abuse with a 15-year-old boy.

According to oregonlive.com, the web site for the Oregonian newspaper in Portland, Or., Terry Bean, 66, of Portland, and his former boyfriend, Kiah L. Lawson, 25, are each accused of having sex in a hotel room in Eugene, Or., with a 15-year-old boy that the two had met through an online gay dating iPhone app.

Bean founded the Human Rights Campaign (HRC), which recently set up shop in Jackson and is spending \$310,000 in Mississippi on its "All God's Children" campaign to convince the state's residents that LGBT lifestyles are equal in the eyes of God to more traditionally-Biblical lifestyles.

HRC officials have said the state's Baptist population is a particular target of the campaign, which includes prime-time television commercials featuring Mary Jane Kennedy of Florence, described on the HRC web site as a "Southern Baptist mother," and Stan Wilson, pastor of Northside Church in Clinton.

Bean is a personal friend and fundraiser for U.S. President Barack Obama, a frequent guest at The White House, and has flown on Air One with the President.



BEAN

"To all my friends, please be assured that I am innocent of all these charges," Bean said in a statement that oregonlive.com reported was posted to

Bean's Facebook account. "My lawyers have insisted that the facts come out in the courtroom and not in the press, but I am eager to share the truth, and I am grateful for all of your support you have shown me during this time. Thanks, Terry."

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From the editor

WILLIAM PERKINS

A ruined world

Every generation likely believes that they lived or are living at the pinnacle of man's inhumanity to his fellow man. The Civil War, where advanced weaponry met outdated tactics, would be one extreme example. There was World War I and the widespread use of devastating chemical warfare. For sheer volume of brutality on a global scale, World War II would be difficult to match.

Today's world situation most probably ranks somewhere close to the top, however, because of the global targeting of innocent non-combatants. We live in a time that allows stateless terrorist groups to move about in the shadows, picking off children. ISIS, one of the most blood-thirsty groups in the world today, is on the verge of declaring itself a state once they cleanse all the infidels from the territory they have seized.

Nary a day goes by without another report of a homicide bomber somewhere destroying not only himself but everyone around him. Humanitarian workers are slaughtered for political reasons. Radical fundamentalists applaud the murders of more than 3,000 people killed on 9/11, and declare that God is glorified by such acts.

Our own home-grown terrorists feel no sympathy for the innocent, in the case of Timothy McVeigh even going to his execution cynically declaring the babies murdered in his bombing of Oklahoma City's Murrah Federal Building were nothing more than "collateral damage."

Meanwhile, the streets of many of our great American metropolises are ruled by ruthless gangs willing to do anything to anybody who stands between them and their wildly lucrative drug business. Police are often outgunned and outguined, and considered by these people as just another obstacle to be eliminated by whatever means necessary.

Has human life ever been worth less? Has human depravity ever gone lower? Have we ever been farther away from our Creator and Father? Perhaps, but there's no doubt the world is in bad shape at the moment.

If we ever needed a Prince of Peace, we need Him now.

We need a Prince of Peace to still the violence that destroys so many people — many of whom go into eternity without salvation. We need a Prince of Peace to compel combatants to lay down their weapons so food and medicine and the Gospel can get to the people who need it most, because that's inarguably more important than political grievances.

We need a Prince of Peace to teach us that the differences setting us against one another are only skin deep, and that our loving Heavenly Father loves us all. We need a Prince of Peace to show us how to turn the other cheek, and how two wrongs don't make a right.

We need a Prince of Peace to demonstrate for us how we should raise our children and treat our elders, because we no longer seem to have that knowledge. We need a Prince of Peace to intercede for the very young and the very old, who we despise so much for the inconvenience they create.

We need a Prince of Peace to help us overcome the pettiness in our small lives, and invite us to become a part of something much bigger and infinitely more important than ourselves. We need a Prince of Peace to keep us focused on the main thing and deliver us from the snares and distractions of the Evil One: money, power, sex, ego, and self-centeredness, to name only a few.

Thank God we have been given just such a Prince of Peace in Jesus Christ who, because he walked among us as one of us, understands us better that we understand ourselves. Thank God we have a Prince of Peace who serves even today as the perfect example of what our Heavenly Father expects of us. Thank God that our Prince of Peace is more than sufficient to defeat the Evil One and save us from an eternity of damnation.

This Christmas, let us lift our voices in praise to God and Son, and pray that all the people of the world will one day soon know the peace we know that has been so freely given to us by the Savior.

We've got a lot of work to do. Let's get started.

The little entanglements

The other day I looked down from my office desk and saw a gigantic cockroach. Fortunately, this roach had a bigger problem than terrorizing me. It had gotten caught in a thin, almost unnoticeable spider's web. The web was so imperceptible that you almost couldn't even see the spider that was now slowly making its way to the flailing cockroach. The faster the roach moved in the web the more it got entangled, and the more it got entangled the swifter its imminent destruction.

I couldn't help but wonder how ironic that something so much stronger was about to be devoured by something so much weaker. I mean, bug-to-bug, it would have been no contest. The spider should've been running from him, but the spider had this one decisive advantage. Its victim was ensnared.

The moment that roach stepped into that web, it was only a matter of time before it would be destroyed. It's the same with us.

There's a web waiting for you around the corner, and it's got your name on it. In fact, it's even closer than that. The sticky strings set out to destroy you are within you. Sound a little dramatic? Check out what Paul said about himself: "So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members" (Romans 7:21-23).

Paul must've known about the spider webs in his life. He knew sin was deceptive. He knew he was free from it. He knew he was a slave to righteousness and that there was no possible way that he could hang out, get tangled up, and be comfortable in the web of sin.

He also knew that his sin nature was constantly working to trap and ensnare him.

What are the spiders in your life? We tend to think of the big ones like the giant Shelob in Lord of the Rings, but more often than not it's those seemingly little things that, at first, don't look so threatening. They may even be hiding in a corner, nearly imperceptible to everyone except the Guardian of your soul.



Guest opinion

with Katie McCoy

Where are your sticky webs of compromise? You know, those things that set you up to become tangled (Hebrews 12:1)? Once you walk into the web, you're pretty much a gigantic roach trapped by an exponentially smaller spider. It's only a matter of time before you'll be entangled, ensnared, and devoured.

Make no mistake, whatever your posture towards it may be right now, wherever you are in relationship to the web, it is serious stuff. Life and death serious.

How can we see through the sticky webs of compromise? By seeing Jesus in all of His glory and worth and magnificence, which transforms us "into the same image from one degree of glory to another" (2 Corinthians 3:18). The same Jesus who is for you (Psalm 56:9). Who is good and never holding out on you (Ps. 84:11). Who cares about your joy even more than you do (John 15:11, 16:24).

Maybe you're ensnared in the web right now. Perhaps what looked like a small spider of sin is now an enormous in-your-face force of destruction. What hope do you have? Cry out to God right now, just like Paul did: "Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (Romans 7:24-25).

He has killed all your spiders, no matter how big and ferocious or small and familiar (Colossians 2:13-15). He is guiding you away from the cobwebs (Psalm 18:30-34), and He will — He will — keep you from becoming entangled again (Jude 1:24).

McCoy is the editor of *BiblicalWoman.org*, where this column first appeared, and is pursuing a doctorate at Southwest-ern Seminary in Ft. Worth.

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SBC leader: 'Unify, pray' after Ferguson, Mo., unrest

NASHVILLE (BP) — The unfolding Ferguson, Mo., saga calls churches to "unify and pray for our nation," said the president of National African American Fellowship within the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC).

K. Marshall Williams, senior pastor of Nazarene Church in Philadelphia, Pa., said in a statement to Baptist Press in the hours after a grand jury reported its decision not to indict a white Missouri police officer in the shooting death of an 18-year-old African American, "We need to be both an empathetic listening ear for the community and herald forth a prophetic voice for justice and compassion in a spirit of humility."

"In times like these, our love for God must manifest itself in tangible ways by love for one another and love for our neighbor," Williams said. "The African American communities of this nation are our neighbor and right now we are hurting in ways which very few people groups in this nation have a historical reference point to appreciate," he said, referencing eras in U.S. history when it seemingly was "safe to murder Negroes."

"A radical obedience to the Gospel and an unflinchingly Christ-centered engagement of the age-old questions of whether we are our brother's keeper is in order especially at this time," Williams said. The church must be "a catalyst for unprecedented revival and spiritual awakening in our land that will manifest itself in how we honor God, our Creator

and the created of His creation."

SBC President Ronnie Floyd, pastor of Cross Church in northwest Arkansas, in a statement to Baptist Press said, "Only the Gospel of reconciliation through Jesus Christ can heal the broken in heart, bridge the racial divide that marks our society, and calm the passions that grip the human heart. Our prayers continue for the Brown family and for the pastors and churches in the Ferguson, Mo., area and across the

United States as they seek to minister the message of God's peace to individuals in their communities who have been impacted by this tragedy."

Fred Luter, the SBC's immediate past president and pastor of Franklin Avenue Church in New Orleans, told Baptist Press, "The only way that the racial problem will be resolved in our country is to understand what really is the main problem. As my friend K. Marshall Williams, the current

president of the National African American Fellowship, often says, 'We do not have a "skin" problem in America, we have a "sin" problem in America! And to that I say Amen! Until lost men are changed on the inside, we cannot expect to see change on the outside.'

Luter, the first African-American SBC president, acknowledged that "there are mixed emotions about the verdict in the Ferguson case across the Southern Baptist Convention. However, because of the fact that none of us were in the courtroom to hear the testimony before the grand jury,



WILLIAMS



FLOYD



MOORE



ANGER OVER DECISION — Numerous fires were set in Ferguson, Mo., following the decision Nov. 24 by a grand jury not to indict Officer Darren Wilson in the shooting death of 18-year-old Michael Brown. Protesters blocked highways, looted businesses, and burned buildings and cars throughout the evening. (BP Photo)

we must trust the process and the legal system.

"The fact is, the only thing leaders can do to usher in peace is to speak in one voice that violence is not the way to deal with issues that you do not agree with. The life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. is a testimony of what can happen through nonviolent protest. A lot of the rights and privileges that African Americans enjoy today are a direct result of the non-violent protest of Dr. King and those who marched with him during the civil rights movement."

Russell D. Moore, president of the SBC Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission in Nashville, issued a statement shortly

after the grand jury announcement was made.

"The country hasn't yet 'sorted through all the evidence the grand jury saw [to know] precisely what happened in this nightmarish incident," Moore said. The Ferguson crisis, he said, "is one of several in just the past couple of years where white and black Americans have viewed a situation in starkly different terms."

"In the public arena, we ought to recognize that it is empirically true that African-American men are more likely, by virtually every measure, to be arrested, sentenced, executed, or murdered than their white peers," Moore said. "We cannot shrug that off with apathy" but

must have "consciences that are sensitive to the problem."

"(H)ow can we get there when white people do not face the same experiences as do black people?" Moore asked in his statement. "... [W]e will need churches that are not divided up along carnal patterns of division — by skin color or ethnicity or economic status. We will need churches that reflect the manifold wisdom of God (Ephesians 3:10) in the joining together of those who may have nothing else in common but the image of God, the blood of Christ, and the unity of the Spirit. When we know one another as brothers and sisters, we will start to stand up and speak up for one another."

Baptists offer solace, shelter during Ferguson days of rage

FERGUSON, Mo. (BP) — Stoney Shaw, pastor of First Church in Ferguson, Mo., never imagined that protestors would wreak so much havoc after a grand jury reported their decision not to indict police officer Darren Wilson in the shooting death of 18-year-old African American Michael Brown. "Ferguson can never go back to the way it was," Shaw said.

Although First Church was untouched by protestors, Shaw said evidence of violence from the night of Nov. 24 surrounds the downtown church building: The Walgreens across the street was looted and set ablaze while an abandoned KFC next to the church was pockmarked by bullets.

Shaw and other Missouri Baptist leaders have worked with city officials, community members, and protestors since Brown's

Aug. 9 death to help revitalize suffering businesses and prevent further destruction to downtown Ferguson amid racial tensions and weeks of sometimes violent protests in the St. Louis suburb.

"I thought that protestors would march up and down the streets, maybe light a few fires, but I had no idea it would be this bad," Shaw told The Pathway news journal of the Missouri Baptist Convention. "I'm very upset at our local and state authorities for allowing looters to burn and loot."

First Church has served as a house of prayer for people from across the state and nation. In September, the National Day of Prayer bus, sponsored by the National Day of Prayer Task Force, stopped at the church and led a prayer service for the community as part of its 34-day tour through 14 states coast to coast.

Additionally, First Church along with other churches in the area opened its doors to school-aged children. The local school district decided to cancel classes Nov. 24 because of the violence that followed the announcement of the grand jury decision. Parents who still needed to work dropped their kids off at the church, confident that they would be cared for and fed, Shaw recounted.

John Yeats, executive director of the Missouri Baptist Convention, said "Missouri Baptists are united in prayer for the people of Ferguson."

"While it is clear that the grand jury decision cannot possibly satisfy everyone, Christians can commit our words and our deeds to the Lord Jesus," Yeats said. "He's the Great Physician upon whom we must call to bring peace to our hearts, gracious words to our lips

and conciliatory action to our feet.

"Our churches in and around Ferguson have served as the hands and feet of Jesus to an anguished community, and for that we are deeply grateful," Yeats said. "Our prayer is that the Lord brings to every heart the peace that passes all understanding so that we set our minds on honoring Him in the midst of every storm."

Mark Snowden, the state convention's evangelism/discipleship strategist, said he hopes events in Ferguson will change the community and nation for the better.

"My prayer before the Lord is that racial reconciliation will lead Missouri Baptists to a new revival in their walk with Christ," Snowden said, "and may that revived spiritual zeal splash over into the streets, bringing spiritual awakening to St. Louis' communities and beyond."

"My prayer before the Lord is that racial reconciliation will lead Missouri Baptists to a new revival in their walk with Christ, and may that revived spiritual zeal splash over into the streets, bringing spiritual awakening to St. Louis' communities and beyond."

Mark Snowden

Missouri state convention's evangelism/discipleship strategist

It used to be that there was more attention given to the problems of noise pollution than we hear about these days. Of course, we've moved on to other problems and other pollutions that have become more significant and more important than just loud sounds of trucks and planes, or maybe we've just gotten used to the noise and the noise may be taking its toll. There are of course a lot of people who are concerned about today's environment as people download thousands of songs, put ear buds in their ear channels, and crank it up to the point where you can't hear anything surrounding you, but may be damaging your hearing as the days and the years go by.

In the Bible, noise is a fascinating thing. You may remember when Moses is coming down from the mountain from receiving the Ten Commandments, he heard the noise of the people and he was trying to interpret what it meant. Was there a war going on? Was there a celebration going on? Of course, the closer he got the more he realized that the something going on here was not good. Noise. You may recall too when Paul went to Mars Hill and was going to speak. An interesting verse in Acts that is revealing as many of the people said, "What will this babbler say" (17:18). Paul, who was preaching the Gospel, was treated by those who came and sat around listening to new ideas as little more than just a noise maker. I suppose every preacher has experienced the feeling that some in the congregation see them in the same light, a babbler, a noise maker, while at the same time they may be preaching the wonderful, glorious gospel of our Lord Jesus.

In our world there are so many different instruments and ways that we can have noise going on. It is incredible there are all kind of devices and all kind of noise being made. Some



Getting Used to the Noise

time ago I was staying in a home that was right near the railroad tracks. As I went to sleep that night it was peaceful and quiet but in the middle of the night I was awakened by a train coming through my bedroom. That's what it felt like, sounded like and what I thought whenever I woke up. Literally, the house was shaking and the windows were rattling and the train was blowing his whistle and it sounded like it was about two feet from the outside wall of the house. It was farther than that, but in the middle of the night it sure did shake the place. The next day I asked the folks at the house, "Does that train wake y'all up every time it goes by in the night?" They just laughed and said, "No, we're used to the noise. We don't hear it in the night and we don't even pay attention to it when it goes by during the day." "Really," I said. "Yeah. We're used to the noise and we don't even notice it." I suppose there are times when just getting used to the noise is a good thing and you don't pay attention to it, but I do believe on the other hand that there are a lot of folks who have gotten used to noises that they need to pay attention to but yet they ignore.

We need to pay attention to the sudden shocking noise. For example, here in central Mississippi on the first day of the month at 12 o'clock noon the weather sirens go off for a test and I must confess every first day of the month it always gets my attention and sometimes shockingly so. I just don't get used to the noise coming every thirty or thirty-one days. After I hear it for just a minute, I realize it's the first of the month and they are testing the system. But, in a spiritual kind of way, there are times when the noise of life comes with a tragic sound or an alarming sound, suddenly, and while we should pay attention, many people do not. It is as though God has a spiritual alarm system whereby He tries to get our attention. Maybe it is a tragedy that has struck or a death that has taken place or a visit to the doctor for one of life's sudden downturns and there's the accompanying crash in life. Could it be that on occasion those noises, though you may ignore them, are simply God trying to get your attention to wake up and look up and take care of what He has entrusted you to take care of?

On the other hand, we need to pay attention to the soft stirring noise around us. The Bible describes God speaking to us sometimes in a still, small voice. For most parents and indeed all mothers, a baby can whimper in the middle of the night and those sounds are like shouts into her ear though they are just gentle groaning. The mother is compelled to see if the baby is okay or if the child needs something. It is amazing how the little gentle dripping of a faucet becomes more like a bass drum the longer you hear it and the more you know it needs attention. But God can speak in sudden loud noises and can speak in gentle soft stirring noises also by which He still is trying to get our attention.

This may sound strange but it is important to listen to the silent stop noises of life. Sometimes we get so used to the roar of the noise when it stops, the silence can grab you by both ears and the silence begins to speak to you. How can that be? Well, it happens. Maybe it happened for you when you lost someone or maybe someone moved out and left you. Maybe for some it's the empty nest; the house has become so quiet you could hear the silence. It's not a bad time to let God reorder things in your life, speak to you in a new way, about new activities and new systems of service and new opportunities to be of help to your children or your grandchildren or your friends or your church, all because of the sound of silence.

The bottom line is this — in whatever way and whatever method, God is not just trying to fill our lives with noise but wants us to be sensitive to hearing His voice. His care for us. Today if you hear His voice, harden not your hearts (Heb. 4:7).

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Clue: J = U

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Luke 16:16

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December 4, 2014

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Matthew 10:27 NAS

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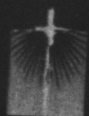
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6:30 P.M.

REGION 5
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HATTIESBURG
JANUARY 22
6:30 P.M.

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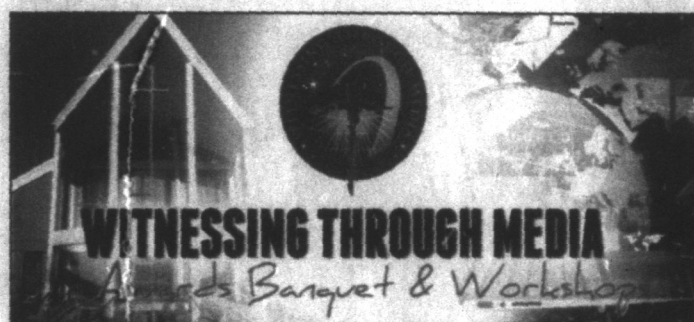
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- Entries in the Awards Competition must have been produced or aired between January 1, 2014 – January 1, 2015
- Award Entry Deadline is January 23, 2015
- Entry form and registration is online

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- Banquet and Workshop Registration Deadline is March 6, 2015
- Registration for all activities (Banquet and Workshop) is: \$35 per person
- Friday Awards Banquet only or Saturday Workshop only is \$25 per person

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LOCATIONS

Thursday, January 8, 2015

6 - 8:45 p.m.

Michael Memorial Baptist Church, Gulfport, MS

Thursday, January 15, 2015

6 - 8:45 p.m.

Sebastopol Baptist Church, Sebastopol, MS

Tuesday, January 20, 2015

6 - 8:45 p.m.

First Baptist Church, Okolona, MS

Thursday, February 5, 2015

6 - 8:45 p.m.

Sunrise Baptist Church, Petal, MS

Thursday, February 12, 2015

6 - 8:45 p.m.

BSU Center, East Mississippi Community College, Decatur, MS

Tuesday, March 24, 2015

6 - 8:45 p.m.

Liberty Baptist Church, Liberty, MS

Thursday, March 26, 2015

6 - 8:45 p.m.

BSU Center, Mississippi Delta Community College, Moorehead, MS

For more information contact the Discipleship/Family Ministry Department of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, PO Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530 800-748-1651, ext. 283, or 601-292-3283.

Pray this day for...

December 5 - 31, 2014

"None of the good promises the Lord had made to the house of Israel failed. Everything was fulfilled." Joshua 21:45

Pray for: Richard & Martha Beal , missionaries ministering to American Peoples through financial administration, church/home outreach & evangelism.	Pray for: David & Laurie Bledsoe , missionaries ministering to American Peoples through church/home outreach & evangelism.	Pray for: Kaye Brooks , missionary ministering to American Peoples through church planting.	Pray for: Donald & Dorina Brown , missionaries ministering to European Peoples through church planting, church/home outreach & evangelism.	Pray for: Karen Brown , missionary ministering to American Peoples through nursing.	Pray for: James & Mary Adair , missionaries ministering to Sub-Saharan African Peoples through church planting, church/home outreach & evangelism.	Pray for: Bethany Allen , missionary ministering to European Peoples through community outreach & evangelism.
Pray for: David & Pamela Carlton , missionaries ministering to Sub-Saharan African Peoples through theological education, church/home outreach & evangelism.	Pray for: Richard & Wanda Clark , missionaries ministering to European Peoples through strategic coordination.	Pray for: Rebekah Clark , missionary ministering to European Peoples through youth evangelism.	Pray for: Cindy Demars , missionary ministering to European Peoples through church/home outreach & evangelism.	Pray for: Guy DeMars , missionary ministering to Sub-Saharan African Peoples through hospital/coordination.	Pray for: John & Claudia Brown , missionaries ministering to Sub-Saharan African Peoples through church/home outreach & evangelism.	Pray for: Matthew Burks , missionary ministering to European Peoples through evangelism.
Pray for: Aaron & Tiffany Egan , missionaries ministering to American Peoples through church/home outreach & evangelism.	Pray for: Sheila Flowers , missionary ministering to European Peoples through strategic coordination.	Pray for: Robert & Margaret Fortenberry , missionaries ministering to Sub-Saharan African Peoples through church/home outreach & evangelism.	Pray for: David & Gloria Glaze , missionaries ministering to European Peoples through media coordination & promotion.	Pray for: Clarence Frank & Phoebe Harrison , missionaries ministering to American Peoples through church/home outreach & evangelism.	Pray for: Thomas & Kerri Dewett , missionaries ministering to American Peoples through church/home outreach & evangelism.	Pray for: Alvin & Mary Doyle , missionaries ministering to European Peoples through member care.
Pray for: Earl & Ramona Hewitt , missionaries ministering to Sub-Saharan African Peoples through medical outreach & evangelism.	Pray for: Raymond & Cynthia Hodgins , missionaries ministering to European Peoples through sports evangelism, church/home outreach & evangelism.	Pray for: Jeffery & Lisa Holman , missionaries ministering to American Peoples through strategic coordination.	Pray for: Ronald & Beverly Holmes , missionaries ministering to European Peoples through church planting, church/home outreach & evangelism.			

The IMB missionaries listed in the HouseTops prayer calendar are currently active in 2-4 year terms or in career service.



2/02/07
MISS ALESSIA WORTHY
Charlie & Shannon Worthy
European Peoples

2/16/01
MR. HADDON BLEDSOE
Parents: David & Laurie
American Peoples

2/23/06
MISS OLIVIA
Parents: Greg and Heather
American Peoples

2/24/00
MR. NATHAN PEACOCK
Parents: Kevin & Brenda
European Peoples

Encourage an MK with a card!



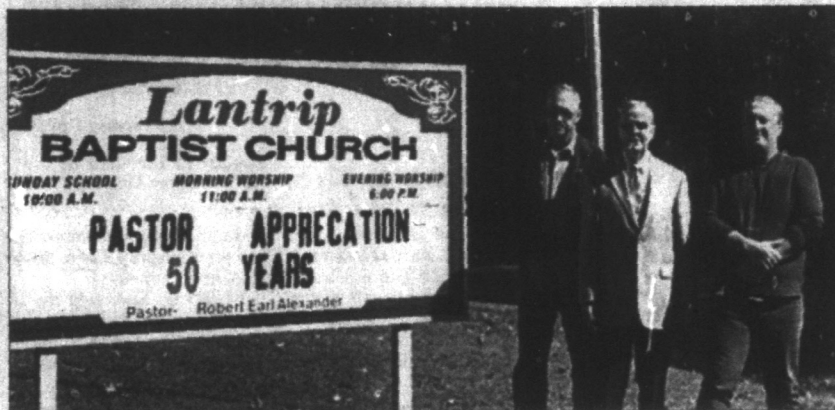
FOR SECURITY, cards will be forwarded. Please send all to: MCB WMU MK Birthdays, PO Box 530, Jackson MS 39205.
PLEASE NOTE: Church members may send a package of cards together; cards do not have to be sent individually to the WMU. Individual cards do not need postage stamps when sent as a package to MS WMU.
Please be sure your cards arrive in WMU one month prior to the first date on this birthday list.

HOUSE TOPS

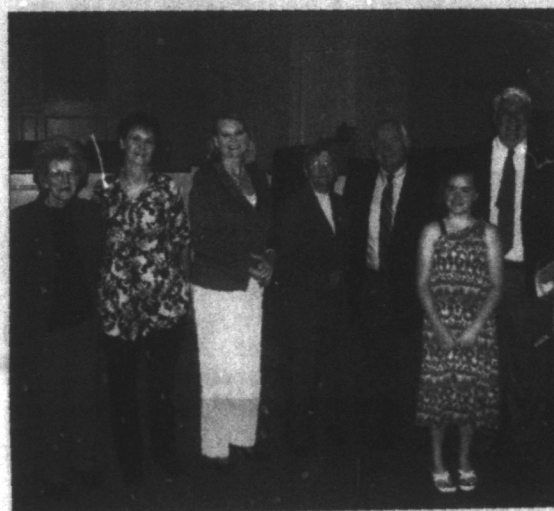
Just for the Record



HOPEWELL CHURCH, BUDE, has a brand new Children in Action group. The children made donation cans on World Hunger Sunday and collected money for the Global Hunger Relief Fund.



LANTRIP CHURCH, BRUCE, hosted a reception honoring Robert Earl Alexander for his 50 years of service as pastor. Shown are Alexander with deacons Bobby Sexton and Benny Barefield.



BUNKER HILL CHURCH, COLUMBIA, awarded perfect attendance pins Nov. 16. Shown are Iva Mae Selmon, 1 yr.; Sheron Lowrey, 2 yr.; Wanda Grice, Myrtis Robbins, and Randy Gardner, 3 yr.; and Isabel Shivers & Jiles Grice, 4 yr.



MT. PISGAH CHURCH, CARROLL COUNTY, held a note burning for a complete renovation and enlargement of their sanctuary in addition to two new Sunday School rooms. The \$250,000 project was declared debt free in two years. Lanny Haley, pastor.



CENTRAL CHURCH, MERIDIAN, honored George Eagle for 20 years of service as church treasurer. Shown are pastor Gary Blair and Eagle.

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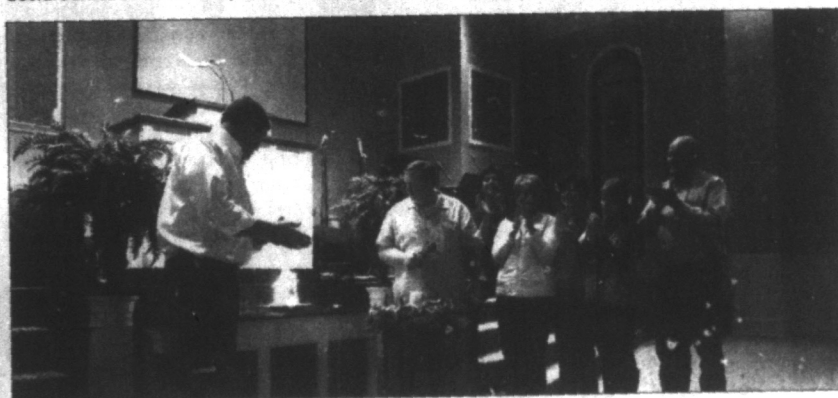
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MORRISON CHAPEL CHURCH, CLEVELAND, held a note burning on their new sanctuary and Sunday School rooms. Shown are deacon chairman Greg Jackson, pastor John Thomas, Joyce Aycock, Betty Junkin, Vickie Smith, Sonya Burchfield, and Donald Gant.

In other Church News:

► The Scott County Homeschoolers served at the Carlisle Crisis Center, a ministry of the **Scott County Association**, Nov. 20. The group of 25+ cleaned, stocked shelves, and prepared items to be ready when needed. The center provides food and clothing assistance to families in need.

BAN

cont. from p. 1

continue to pray. This ruling does not become effective until the two-week stay is lifted. Pray that the Fifth Circuit will continue Judge Reeves' stay until the case works its way through the court appeals process and until they decide the other related cases.

"Secondly, it is imperative that we continue to evangelize the whole world regardless of color, race, creed, or sexual orientation. Also, we must continue to preach and teach Biblical truths to our congregations, to our culture, and particularly to our children.

"We should never apologize or refrain from declaring that marriage is between a man and a woman. And finally, every word and every action should always be motivated by love for God and love for His creation."

Mississippi voters approved Amendment 1 of 2004 by a 72% margin (86%-14%). The amendment was codified as Article XIV, Section 263A of the Mississippi Constitution and states:

Marriage may take place and may be valid under the laws of this state only between a man and a woman. A marriage in another state or foreign jurisdiction between persons of the same gender, regardless of when the marriage took place, may not be recognized in this state and is void and unenforceable under the laws of this state.

"Once again the judicial bench has disregarded the ballot box and the overwhelming will of (the people of) a state," Porter said. The U.S. is currently a

"We should never apologize or refrain from declaring that marriage is between a man and a woman. And finally, every word and every action should always be motivated by love for God and love for His creation."

Jimmy Porter

executive director of the Mississippi Baptist Christian Action Commission

patchwork of judicial rulings on same sex marriage at various court levels. The Mississippi appeal joins appeals at the Fifth Circuit from the states of Texas and Alabama. The Sixth Circuit in Cincinnati recently overturned lower court rulings

and upheld same sex marriage bans in Kentucky, Ohio, Michigan, and Tennessee.

Observers have said the issue is likely headed to the U.S. Supreme Court. Any ruling by the nine justices there would be applied nationwide.

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BANGLADESH

cont. from p. 1

according to the 2011 census, with Hindus making up 9.5% of the total population. Most of the remainder is Christian (largely Roman Catholic) and Theravada-Hinayana Buddhist. There are small numbers of Shia Muslims, Bahais, animists, and Ahmadiyya Mus-

lims. The U.S. government estimates population at 163.7 million people.

This story first appeared in Morning Star News (www.MorningStarNews.org), a California-based independent news service focusing on the persecution of Christians worldwide. Used by permission. Edited for style and length.

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Jesus said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life." (John 8:12)

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1. Lord, I admit that I need you. (I have sinned.)
2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. (I repent.)
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. (I believe in Jesus.)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life. From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with Him. (I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

"But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name." (John 1:12)
If you make a decision for Christ today, contact a local Southern Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

Submission Guidelines

The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention. News items and/or photographs depicting benefits and activities for secular or outside organizations will not be published.

Preferred method: news may be submitted electronically to the e-mail address below, and must be included in the message segment of an e-mail form. Secondary method: news may be typewritten or neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper and mailed. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone. Due to ever-present virus threats, no text attachments will be accepted. Photograph attachments in JPEG format are permissible.

Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

Photographs must be submitted electronically

via e-mail, as attachments in JPEG format. Hard copy photographs mailed through the postal service will not be accepted. Photographs must be clear, sharp, and well-lighted. Photographs must depict people. No landscape, building, or object-only photographs will be printed. Photographs containing inappropriate gestures and objectionable clothing will not be published. Cell phone photographs and other low resolution items that do not reproduce well on newsprint are generally not publishable.

There is no guarantee that news items and/or photographs will be published, and unsolicited material will not be acknowledged or returned. All news items are subject to editing, and all photographs are subject to cropping. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date. Articles that are not date-sensitive will be published on a space-available basis. These guidelines are not meant to be exhaustive.

Submit news to The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. FAX: (601) 292-3330. E-mail: baptistrecord@mbcb.org.

Deliverance is Needed • Esther 3:1-9

Wick Broomall noted, "Perhaps no other book of the Bible has been attacked as bitterly and vehemently as the Book of Esther. Because of its spirit of nationalism and vindictiveness, critics have declared it unworthy of a place in the sacred Canon."

Context

In 587 BC, Nebuchadnezzar ended Judah's independence. Jerusalem fell to the Babylonian army (2 Kg. 25:1-21; 2 Chr. 36:11-21; Jer. 52:1-30).

When, in 539 BC, Persia defeated Babylon, the living conditions of God's people improved slightly. The Persians were more benevolent dictators (See 2 Chr. 36:22-23; Ezra 1:1-11; 3:1-7; 4:1-5; 5:11-17; 6:1-15; 7:1-6, 11-28; 8:24-30, 35-36; 9:9; Neh. 2:1-9, 17-18), but the Jews did not taste freedom until the Maccabean Revolt, an uprising that began in 167 BC.

The story of Esther transpires when Ahasuerus, also known as Xerxes (NIV), ruled "from India to Ethiopia" (1:1, NASB). He was the fifth monarch of the Achaemenid Dynasty (Lindsay Allen, *The Persian Empire*). His reign (486-465 BC) coincided with Persia at its height.

Have you seen The 300 Spartans (1962) or 300 (2006)? If so, then you watched a dramatized excerpt of Ahasuerus' life, specifically his costly military campaign against Greece.

Connection

The Book of Esther forces readers to rethink the mundane. "Mundane,"

according to Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, is "characteristic of the world" or "characterized by the practical, transitory, and ordinary: commonplace."

You and I tend to discount or dismiss that which typically happens. Perhaps, like Elijah, we believe that God's agenda cannot advance without "shock and awe." The ninth-century prophet fixated on fire falling from the sky (1 Kg. 18:20-40; 19:1-8) until God revealed himself as a still, small voice (1 Kg. 19:9-14).

The Book of Esther displays God's ability to work remarkably behind the scenes. Proving it, whether intended or not, the author never mentions El ("God"), Elohim ("God"), Yahweh ("LORD"), or Adonai ("Lord"). Can you detect God's unseen hand? To realize that something miraculous just occurred requires no discernment, but to recognize his sovereignty in the midst of minutia is not possible without faith, "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1, KJV).

The Book of Esther should break our habit of underestimating God. No one has ever been better at being subtle. Hence, Kittie L. Suffield penned, "Little is much when God is in it!"

Esther was the quintessential "underdog," a foreign orphan girl (2:5-7): likely to be overlooked or oppressed in the Ancient Near East (See Dt. 10:17-19; 14:28-29; 26:12-15; 27:19; Ps. 94:6; Jer. 22:3; Zech. 7:10); an unlikely candidate to deliver any people group. God relishes such odds (See 1 Cor. 1:26-29). Count the cast of pagan characters that he quietly used to elevate Esther:

Content

Esther 1-3 documents the rise of two people: Esther and Haman. Meanwhile, the self-proclaimed "king of kings" (A.T. Olmstead, *History of the Persian Empire*, 231) plays the role of spectator. Ahasuerus is nothing but reactive: angry at Vashti (1:10-12), helpless (1:13-22), downcast (2:1), desperate (2:2-4), and clueless about Haman's scheme (3:1-15). The real King of Kings works backstage to rescue his people, thus keeping his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

The descendants of Abraham "according to the flesh" have always been mistreated, justifying our coining of the term "anti-Semitism." The descendants of Abraham "by faith" (Rom. 4) have fared no better; the reason why Jesus reminded all disciples, "In the world you have tribulation" (Jn. 16:33, NASB; See also Mt. 10:17-23; 24:9-10; Mk. 13:9-13; Lk. 6:22-23; 21:10-19; Jn. 15:18-21; 17:14-15). We Christians should not be shocked by hostility from a world that today advocates tolerance.

Conclusion

Esther 4-10 will be the focus of next week's lesson. The rest of the story reveals that the might of the mundane (Haman) was no match for the subtle of the spiritual (Esther).

Parke is professor, Department of Christian Studies and Philosophy, Mississippi College, and a member of Morrison Heights Church, Clinton.



Explore the Bible

with Ivan Parke

exhorts us to reclaim the mundane. Likewise, Jesus admonished us, "Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; therefore be shrewd as serpents, and innocent as doves" (Mt. 10:16, NASB). Why then do we concede politics to Washington D.C., economics to Wall Street, and culture to Hollywood? Jesus rightly lamented, "The sons of this age are more shrewd in relation to their own kind than the sons of light" (Lk.16:8, NASB).

The Shelter of God's Presence • Psalm 23:1-6

Mississippi had been warned. Weather alerts had been going off all morning. My family and I gathered at our barnyard gate to study the western sky on that eventful day-April 24, 2010. We saw the tornado cloud move over the Ebenezer community. Suddenly, in unison, we knew it was time to run for shelter. Where does one go when an EF4 tornado is headed in your direction?

An underground storm shelter is the best place to try to escape a tornado. But where do you run when the storms of life assail? Do you go to the Word of God? "He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty" (Psalm 91:1 ESV). Shelter or dwelling is something that covers or protects from the elements or danger. As we enter into this new quarter and sacred season, perhaps you need to experience afresh the embracing presence of Christ in your life. Psalm 23 is known as the most familiar, loved, quoted Psalm and it declares assurance of God's continual presence. Take a moment to dwell on two additional passages of Scripture: "Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence?" (Psalm 139:7) and "...I will never leave you nor forsake you" (Heb. 13:6). No

matter where the shepherd went or what he experienced, he knew The Shepherd was with him.

The LORD...is...my...shepherd! First notice the word "is." It is not in the past tense or in the future tense, He is meaning right now, this very moment. Next, embrace the word "my." Charles H. Spurgeon, Treasury of David, wrote, "If He is a Shepherd to no one else, He is a Shepherd to me; He cares for me, watches over me, and preserves me. The words are in the present tense. Whatever our position as believers, we are even now under the pastoral care of Jehovah." The next phrase is positive and abounding, I shall not want. "Those who seek The Lord shall not lack any good thing" (Ps. 34:10) and His grace is sufficient for me (2 Cor. 12:9). Next, note the four activities of the Shepherd's provision. He makes me lie down in green pastures,

He leads me beside still waters, He restores my soul and He leads me in the paths of righteousness. Jesus said, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me" (John 10:27 ESV). It is a matter of placing our faith in the One we can trust the most. He is our nurturer, provider, guide, protector and companion.

There are seasons of life when we

have not just been hit with a storm but a massive tornado. Everything changes and we wonder how we are going to pick up

the pieces or even get through the difficult circumstances and choices we are facing. In the next passage, ponder on the phrase, Even though I walk... "Walking indicates the steady advance of a soul who knows the road, knows its end, resolves to follow the path, feels quite safe, and perfectly calm and composed (Spurgeon)." Through the valley...it is here we depend and grow

on the faithfulness of God. He is teaching us to trust Him no matter what. Do you trust Him more today than you did yesterday? God's Word promises, no matter what you are facing, He is with you. Proverbs 1:33 states, "Whoever listens to me will dwell safely, and will be sure, without fear of evil (NKJV)." Whatever we are facing, fear gripping our every fiber of being, we must train our minds to stay focused and recall His Word.

In Psalm 23 we see the image of a sheep in the care of the shepherd—Protector. Then the image of The Shepherd who is the ultimate gracious host-Provider. He invites us to dine at the table, blessing us abundantly. As we embrace His presence we experience His goodness and mercies (Lam. 3:22-23). "I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand," Jesus said (John 10: 28). There is a process in learning to dwell in God's loving presence. It is and can be a constant in your life!

Daily Dwell on the Word: Psalm 100:2, 3 (Place it on a notecard and carry it with you this week.)

Leathers is a member of First Church, Madison.

Bible Studies for Life

with Laura Leathers



Just for the Record



WEST MCCOMB CHURCH, MCCOMB, celebrated the retirement of the debt on the new welcome center/children's department Nov. 16. There were 300+ in attendance with the service ending with a note burning and lunch. The event coincided with pastor Vann Windom's 10 year anniversary. He was presented with a new Ford F150 truck.



LIFE SPRING CHURCH, SCOTT ASSOCIATION, and other area churches gave out 150 food boxes after the morning worship service Nov. 22. Shown are some of the families receiving boxes. Scott Magnum and BoBo Phillipson, co-pastors, Life Spring; Gary Wyatt, pastor, North Motion Church.



FIRST CHURCH, HOULKA, honored Wilma Lane Davis Oct. 5 with a special reception recognizing her service as pianist for 65 years. Shown are Davis and pastor David Blackwell.



DOUBLE SPRINGS CHURCH, MANTEE, awarded Wyman Bishop with a certificate of deacon emeritus. Shown are deacon chairman Billy Carpenter, Bishop, and pastor Larry Odom.



VICTORY CHURCH, BROOKHAVEN, held a Greening of the Sanctuary service Nov. 23. Thomas Wicker, pastor.



Steve Roark

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